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IN THE VALLEY OF VISION BY GEOFFREY FABER

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N THE VALLEY OF VISION ❧ POEMS WRITTEN IN TIME OF WAR BY GEOFFREY FABER, CAPTAIN, AUTHOR OF "INTERFLOW."

TO THE MEMORY OF TWO MEN, MY FATHER, WHO LIVED FOR ENGLAND, AND MY BROTHER, WHO DIED FOR HER, I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

¶ "For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains."

FORGED upon the heart
By the troubled brow,
You my songs, depart
From me now.

Ye were born in War
His all-shadowing hour,
Naught of Peace ye saw
From your Tower.

Watching the wide plain
Something have ye seen
Of the loss and gain
That have been.

Somewhat have ye paid
Ares' heavy toll,
Yielding as his blade
Halved my soul.

Yet not yielding all,
Still upon your Tower
Ye foretold his fall,
Scorned his power.

Still ye held as dear
What was dear before,
Honoured far as near,
Less as more.

Blest in that your Tower
Caps the valley still,
Though the skies sink lower,
Hide the hill.

Part! and when men say
Strife's a bitter thing,
Turn your heads their way,
Turn and sing.

September, 1917.

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H. M. F., died March 31st, 1917.

S. C. F., killed in action March 30th, 1917.

SO the sword lay ever silent in its sheath,
Until the appointed Angel, cinct with death,
Drew the white blade, and smote and smote again. For each man hath he a sword, but one for these twain.

Thou Angel, cinct with death, Who doest all things
Better than the best of man's imaginings,
What if Thy sword break his ambitious plan,
O Wise and Silent at the vain dreams of man?

Strong Angel, they who hate Thee are reasonless,
As wounded birds, shrinking from Thy grave caress.
As broken bodies, afraid of Thy swift mending,
Stiff souls and blind, afraid of blindness ending.

But I, who know Thee merciful, Thee kind,
To them that seek, the Way; the Treasure to them that find;
Thee the Keeper of the Door, and Thee the Word
That meaneth more than Life to them that have ears and have heard;

Have I not understood, now Thou hast spoken?
Spent though the wine is, though the bowl be broken,
I know the meaning of the shattered bowl,
Of the spilled wine. I read Thy riddle whole.

Thy Seal is set upon my father's days.
"Live as he lived." *O simple English ways,*
Loved birds, loved wood and river, bat and rod,
Stainless heart, and selfless labour, and trust in God!

All the best, we fight for, in him made plain,
Our manhood's gentle perfection, steadfast in pain.
And many were they that learned of him, and gave
Lives brave and lovely, because he was lovely and brave.

And since, dear brother, for this cause you too died,
For the grave and sweet of freedom, and the grave sweet countryside,
I will not mourn, nor be not glad at heart.
Kinship hath given me pride. Pride too can play grief's part.

RETROSPECT. (June, 1915).

NOW dream to waking those sweet months,
which keep Dew-drenchèd fields a-smoke
in summer dawns, Untroubled tides, and
windless evenings, And blue and gold
and green, all prodigal.
Now wakes the first of those months. Now is June.
But ah! 'tis not the June we loved of old.
For the thunder of a thousand thousand guns
Massacres the dawn and quiet of the day
Through the whole hushless world. In this first June
Earth charms in vain; aye, Man's own children, born
In spaciousness and splendour from the wombs
Of Angels, are all beggared. Love lies dumb,
Dry-eyed in his amaze of grief. Oh June!
Wert thou the last, this year the last of years!

Were it the last! Might now the world, outworn
By evil and by folly, slough its skin
And lie new-glistening in the Summer sun.
The last, in which men worshipped their own gods,
Their cruel, all-commanding, iron gods,
Their flatterer-favouring, self-glorying gods,
And in their names turned all things good to ill.
The last of years, in which men praised themselves
Virtuous and just; since just and virtuous
Is no man; let him not be judged nor judge.
Last of the years, throughout which Power and Wealth,
Uncrowned but obvious tyrants, in dual might,
Sate unopposed, inevitable as Fate,
Stretching huge hands above the obedient earth.

Last, by God's grace, of those mad years and blind
Which tossed their children wide in the world-sea,
Self-schooled in the actual struggle, else unschooled.
For some on the instant mastered the hard stroke,
And some on the instant sank; but many chance
Carried toward land and flung far up the shore
Beyond the reach of the returning waves,
Saved—but of all so saved, were many drooped
Like flowers too soon in frost falling to death,
And few to praise the thunderous name of God.
Ah, youth! Let not those years come back. To-day
The old men envy thee, the old men praise
The schooling which they gave thee. This thou know-
It comes a bitter schooling and a late. [est,

Youth purposeless! which should be purposeful,
Drunk with enthusiasm of sublime gods,
Noble leaders, exalted mysteries,
Faiths, visions, hopes, magnificencies, loves,
Ardours, scarce mentionable in any speech
But music's only, in motion of swift dance,
Or soar of rhythmic numbers, line upon line
Following pauseless, breathless, without end.
"Heavenwards sweep the wild swans, heavenwards I."
So should Youth speak, but with what other voice
Late was heard speaking? As, that Heaven was not,
If not in London, warm between the sheets,
Or somehow earthy. Nay, let Heaven be Earth,
Least can we say it is Earth beautified,
Incarnate Heaven; not mere warm and cold,
Mixed to perfection for some epicure sense.

Youth spoke so, but 'twas the voice of Age;

Age that imagined God in robe and wig,
Pulled down the blinds to keep the sunlight out,
Changed Life to a withdrawing-room, shut up
Youth's swelling temper, like a naughty child,
In locks and cupboards. And the free earth she made
Gardens and parks, and built a wasted peace.
And the wild woods, where grow the anemones,
Timorous of pleasing, pleasing all the more,
And where the blackbird and the cuckoo sing,
And in the fragrant dark the nightingale
Utters her story-laden song and links
Me listening to the listeners of old time:
The wild woods, full of every loveliest thing,
Of yellow primrose and blue hyacinth,
Melting together, as the yellow sands
Melt in the blue tide of the oncoming sea,
Calm of Love into the deep of Love
Merging, its faint perfume and delicate
O'erswept with a new rapture; as the green
Deepens on the beech, and hooded chestnuts huge
Light their cool flower-torches, and oak and ash
Burgeon reluctant with the gay-hearted throng:
The wild woods, full of every blithest thing,
Chirruping grasshoppers, prankt butterflies,
Fern-rustlings, while some woodland creature moves
Through the dim world of undergrowth, or Faun
Or Elf flies lightly from the approach of man,
Where mystery and magic on swallow-wing
Northwards returning hide among the leaves;
The wild woods, where I hold my breath in going,
An admitted worshipper, which should be free
As the bare hills, or as the travelling air,

Or as the unobstructed stars, for all
To worship in, these precincts of the god
And holiest of all earth's holy places,
Railed off from entrance, given to private use
And pleasure—oh, what sacrilege was there!
"Thou shalt not trespass," mocked the voice of Age.

Alas! what had there been for Youth to hear
But braggart voices? Loudest of them all
Were two, one old, one new; either voice harsh.
And first the harsh old voice: "Son, make thy home
With wealth and comfort; stand not in the herd.
Certain it is, whatever parsons say
Of universal brotherhood, the word
'Brother' is used in good parsonical sense,
Viz: without meaning, since into thy hands
The earth and all its fulness have been given.
Go then, enjoy thyself. Spend that thou hast."
And next the harsh new voice followed the old.
"Listen to me, you sons of the new age.
We have no time for dreams now, and no time
For the old nonsense about minds and souls.
Power matters; matters nothing else.
Power is my name. Behold, I write it large
In cities vaster than peoples were of old.
In trains, in factories, in sweat and smoke,
I have written it, and that which I have written
Cannot be blotted out. It is my name
And lies for ever black upon the land."
These voices Youth heard, seldom questioning.
But some few questioned; and there were, who said
The second voice would swallow up the first,

Harsher and louder growing year by year,
Until the whole round world would be fulfilled
With hideous clamour, unison in discord
Of all men crying "Power, Power, Power!"
So some few doubted; but, though doubting, stayed
Listening, like fascinated men; and soon
They too fell shouting, "Power, Power, Power!"
Whereat a very few took fright, and turned
With beating hearts, and faces pale as are
Faces of men afraid to lose their souls.
They turned and hastened, and behind at length
Died down the shouting, and about them came
Pure air and grateful sunshine and benign.
Also far other voices from the past
Came whispering or singing in their ears,
And other lessons, than those taught, they learned
From other teachers. So for a time they moved
Gravely instructed; and in their own heart's house
Communed as friends with the wise happy dead.

Who can forget mankind, that is a man?
Even they, who hearing the new clang and din
On Earth, and her new wounds and filthiness
Beholding, fled away into the past,
Into the uncabin'd splendour and glad strength
Of epic days, when through the open hearth
Bright burned the fire or smokeless blew the breeze,
On the Ithacan beach or on Scamander's banks
Standing, amid the hymnèd heroism
Turned ears to what which would not be forgot,
A noise of crying, through the centuries
Faint but insistent. They unwilling turned

From those fam'd far enchantments, like moonbeams
In August, which from behind huge heapen clouds
Shine on a far white edge of wine-dark sea.
But day drew on, and their dreams thinned apace
A hueless day, lit by the wan cold suns
Of Custom staled and Art grown sick and sad,
And in that sorry light all things they saw
Subdued to Commerce. She it was who gave
Power his being, and he, advised of her,
Took Comfort into his house, and hired her out,
Her and her children, for obedience done,
To all men. So they went their round and lay
Desirable and were of all desired.
Then came their lovers to their lord and said:
"Lord, we have lain with Comfort. Now, we pray thee,
Let her abide with us." He in return:
"Keep her, but pay the price that I shall name."
Then they: "What price, Lord?" And he answering [said:
"I make fair bargaining; the loss is mine.
Give me your dreams, your idle hopes and tears,
All your dumb longings and sharp discontents.
Give me your sicknesses of mind and soul.
Give me your poets—let me scourge them well.
And give me that, which these fools have called Love.
True love is of the body. Let that stay.
So shall ye do me service, and I you."
And they with one accord cried, "Yea to thy Yea!"

Oh! Whither are fled thy glories of old time,
Goddess Athena? Where didst thou lay down *

* The reference is to the great bronze statue of Athena, goddess of wisdom, the masterpiece of Pheidias, which with all the other art-treasures of classical Greece disappeared into the melting pot or the lime-kiln.

Halberk and buckler? Thee, whom Pheidias made,
What Greek Iscariot sold? How dared the flames
Leap round the cauldron wherein thou didst lie?
Did no man's heart burn, when the immortal front
Shivered in the heat, and that which erst had been
Divineliest shaped ran shapeless? No heart burned.
Only the trader rubbed his hands for joy.
What cared he for the old gods? Let them pass
And beauty perish from the minds of men!
Commerce can answer prayer as well as they!

Westward she went, the wanton not of Kings,
But Empires; whore of cities; rich, unclean,
Soulless; desiring only more and more
Subjection underneath her feet. The immense
Earth was her footstool; she cast out her shoe
On Europe, in America she triumphed.
From bourne to bourne of Africa she passed.
Savagery grew more savage for the smell
Which floated in her tracks. And even the huge
Tranced hordes of Asia through their unslumbering
Stirred: and old rivers faster flowed; and gods [sloth
Rocked hideously and spat their monstrous threats
At the new upstart. Little was that to her!
Fated to universal tyranny
She smiled to see such mouthings and passed on.
Of her were all the ancient stories told—
The incubus, the vampire, which in sleek
Semblance of woman sucks her lover's blood.
So was it with us. We placed her over all.
We put our necks beneath her feet. We made
Sacrifice of all things, honour, love, and joy.

If she not smiled, we counted our days vain.
But if she smiled her smile was our reward.
Who but conspired to serve? Kings bent their knees,
Bishops spread out their hands. Art took her wage.
Wealth drove appealing Poverty from her doors.
Philosophy and Learning, hand in hand,
Practised for her their venerable frauds.
Sole of the Muses, she whom I obey,
Stainless remaining, bent not her proud head,
But grave eyes fixt upon the eternal stars
Steadfastly kept, and solitary watch
Over the gates, where Earth to Heaven admits.
She kept her watch unsleeping. Tears sprang not
Into her eyes; they were not in her voice.
But oh! the heart of her was filled with tears,
Remembering days which are not and have been,
Which may be, but perhaps will be no more.

Let the great guns roar all the burning day!
Let all the silver night be dewed with blood!
Let horrible Corruption couch in the grass!
Thunder intolerably on, you guns,
Deafen us! O night and day, be swamped in blood!
Trample the fields, you mangled feet of Pain!
You wounded men, cry out your agony,
Loud in the dumb, deaf sky! Cry out, cry sore!
And misery, be you messenger of war
To every loving home and loving heart!
Now in the battle the old England dies,
And the new England draws to painful birth.
New England, rising over stormy seas,
Crimsoned in mists, to shine upon this dark,

Serene and lovely England, thou wilt breed
No braver men than the old England bred,
But breed them wiser, breed them happier;
Such men as follow nimble-footed hopes
Flashing grey-white in the thicket, and nor rest
Nor dream of resting till the secret'st lair
Lies open; such men breed thou, as the dull earth
Laughs to feel treading her; such men, as call
All old men father, and all young men friend.
For not less nobly now on the equal field,
Less plentifully spared, less dearly given,
The blood of churls than blood of princes flows.
Nay, nobler, more unstinted, dearer still,
Having less share of the Land, wherefrom it came,
Wherefor it falls. The grander title theirs,
Who, without any dream of ancient stone,
Or stately woodlands, or dark-pictured past,
Or widening acres, stream-full, sky-beloved,
Abundant pleasures or power or wealth or fame—
Only the breath of her fog-bitten air,
Taste of her earth, and splendours dimly felt
Hers and so theirs, called them; that like one man
They answered. Shall they be forgotten of her,
Sons of England, her sons and brothers all?

O Youth, O Summer, O heavy-hearted June!

NIGHTS IN ENGLAND AT WAR.—WINTER AND SUMMER.

I.

RAIN falls; the drear sky hugs the shivering town. The whiteness, that is of the day,
Merges in the gray.
I cannot see my book. Night cometh down.
Lights will she bring,
And one, dim-formed and shadowy, ushering
A form yet faintlier seen,
Than whom none dearer to my heart has been
Or ever will be dearer, while I have heart to sing.

And one has eyes to fathom the blue deeps
Of time, great burning eyes.
And one has eyes to scan the flying steeps
Which piercing human skies
Let Heaven in round that angelic head.
O Memory, that art to Fancy wed,
Bring in thy trembling ghost,
And bid her sit awhile beside the fire.
All is not lost.
Though torn is man's desire,
Still art thou fair, and she. Spring up, spring higher,
Revive, dear flames! Let all be as before!
How can the heart be changed? . . . Alas! 'tis Death is at the door.

'Tis Death that stands without, and not the twain
I knew. They are gone far,
Fled to some unguessed star

With all Earth's loveliest, seeing Earth's lovely slain!
They will not come again!
They will not sit again beside my fire.
Looking within
My heart, they saw some brutal-mouthèd sin
Twisting and stirring. Fear, the panic-cryer,
Bade them begone, for that all men were kin,
And in me too began the bloody change.
Death took their place. And oh! the world grows hard and strange.

Dumb are the voices I so loved to hear,
Whose sweet alternate music, like a stream
Of Autumn air down which leaves float and gleam,
Lifted my thoughts and carried them where'er
The inner beauty tended. 'Tis not so now!
Shiftless no more, with bent and earnest brow
Thought urges through the unrelenting dark,
Nor comes to any refuge any more.
The dark relents not, nor the storms abate
Tireless in fury. Bloody-minded Fate
Seeketh her tenderest children, to strip stark
In the black winds and frore,
Adrift upon a sea that hath no charted shore.

II.

Thou hast come down, O Night!
But oh! what melancholy bringest thou,
Although 'tis summer now
And skies be clearly shining and stars be white
As ever in the sweetest spring of youth.
Thou visitest a world, which knows not ruth

And hath said Peace good-bye. Beauty and Truth,
Our messengers that were from Heaven to Earth,
From Earth to Heaven, and oft upon thy wings,
Rode hither, O Night, in calm-spent evenings,
—Where are they now? and where is Joy? and where
[is Mirth?

The air is heavy with the scent of may.
Scarce fifty paces hence,
Beneath the yellowing moon, a nightingale
Almost as in the passionate yesterday
Richens the dark. Almost my senses fail
For that the sound hath sweetness so intense.
Almost it seems as though again I lay
In boyish ecstasy,
Dreaming the unimaginable near,
Dreaming the whole world dear,
Dreaming of men as gods, and life as liberty.

Almost—almost! But ah! the bewitching lie
Is slain, it is scarce born. Such spells as these,
Weak ghosts of old enchantments, have no power.
Less are they than a sigh
Uttered by faintheart in the o'erwhelming hour
For the old life of comfortable ease.
The times do mock such spells.
The web that did entangle all my going
Is dust to-day, and those rare colours all dead,
That once unutterably glowing
Painted angelical some human head.
The tale that this age tells

Hath a harsh sound, and endeth with a jest.
The old soft serious tales—were they or this, the best?

Ah! better tales than either shall be told!
Imagination now is put to school.
No more the ludicrous fool
Who sighed and yearned of old
For vague unprofitable barren things,
For dreams puffed out with emptiness,
Love's uninhabited unmeaning dress,
To him even now the age at struggle brings
Mighty promise of what may be fulfilled
For human kind by human kind to come,
In sacrifice of self so steadily willed.
If this great world be not our final home,
It is no little stay,
No sojourn of an evening and a day,
But all our lives along we sail earth's seas.
We must build better ships, sing better songs than these!

BITTER-FRESH.

OES a boy fresh-singing
In the hill-trapt dale,
As the lark's heart in him springing
Highest Heaven would scale.

How can you be singing
Oh! so bitter-fresh,

Whom the murderous net and clinging
Tightens to enmesh?

Let be, lad, your singing;
O lad, let it be!
For the lark in you is wringing
The man's heart in me.

But lark and you go singing
To clouds big with thunder.
Bitter-fresh your song is, bringing
Me to weep and wonder.

SUMMER EVENING ON THE ORWELL ESTUARY.

THERE'S sun red on the river,
And smoke beyond the hill,
And the tall ships deliver
Their load at quayside still.

There's a shot fired in the covert,
And a car hummed by the park;
And aching cries the plover,
And songfull soars the lark.

Clouds with the sun are setting,
And dark's far silence lief
Almost might bring forgetting,
Almost might silence grief.

But who has heart for killing,
Who knows of brave lads shot?
And who but rides unwilling
Down lanes where friends are not?

And who is he can listen
Heart-easy as I planned,
Watching the red sun glisten
Down river and wet sand?

Great sun, if thou wert leading
This watcher of thy ways,
Down yon gold path receding
To some high court of praise!

Sweet lark, wert thou proclaiming
Heaven beyond the sky,
Doubt and our faint hearts shaming
To follow thee and die!

O then!—I'ld not be grieving,
But lying still I'ld be,
While my glad heart flew cleaving
Yon sullen, sunlit, sea.

THE LANE.

HE lane's dust untrodden lies;
The lovely flowers of the lane
Bloom to no human eyes;
But they bloom not in vain.

For they the fathers are
Of many lovely flowers
In a glad time and a far
From this time of ours.

There will be feet then treading
In the dust of the lane,
And quiet eyes reading
Its beauty again.

And likely a lad will be saying
These verses of mine,
Loitering and staying,
Till the sun's decline

Brings to the length of the lane
A splendour of peace,
As the broad lights wane
And shadows increase.

To him, whoso and whenever,
All my own heart
Longed for be granted for ever—
The life lived apart

From labour of buying and selling
And earning of food,
Free of the stern whip quelling
His heart's every mood.

Free! uncompelled by the will
That is stronger than law
To grind itself in the mill
That grindeth us—War!

And his be the life lived close
To God and to Earth,
To Him who fashioned the rose,
To Her who brings roses to birth.

Wild roses, sweet down the lane!
To him shall you teach
All you have taught me in vain,
O strong sweet speech!

WHERE QUIET IS.



ITH thee too little, O thou Heaven of quiet!
How hath this iron Hand
Blotted thee out from over all our land!
Now the gray clouds at riot
Swarm, now the thunder crashes over me.
Hard is it to tell,
But still up-stayed in thee
Peace, my heart saith, must somewhere surely dwell.

O Peace, O Heaven, O Heaven of men prized still,
Hoped for beyond this life,
Though all the world of men be turned to strife,
Though naked be man's will
At grips with fear and lust and agony!
Somewhere serene, somewhere up-stayed in thee,
Somewhere, sometime,
This death, this misery
We will shed off, and move quiet-winged, sublime.

ANTE ARAM.

HE who is now not smitten, he is accurst.
The Smiter slays the splendid, spares the churl;
The poor in spirit he spares, but Greatheart fells. ❧ So fell me, Smiter; let me not be spared. ❧ Account me strong enough to bear the worst.
We have all sinned, and all of us the whirl
Of the fierce wheel bears down to our own hells.
He who returns to Heaven must Hell have dared.

Now laughter flits from lip to lip. Let me
So laugh that I the double burden bear,
In that high spirit these high times command,
Forgetting nothing, armed against surprise,
Ready, without heart wrapped in silly glee,
Or head averted from War's terrible stare,
All that is mine, should He straightway demand,
To give, and giving smile into His eyes.

"O BARREN LAND."


BARREN land,
O desolate soul,
O useless hand!

O desolate soul,
O heart without hope,
Void of purpose or goal!

O heart without hope,
O desire without aim,
Lacking vision and scope!

O stumbling desire,
O hand without skill,
So quick to tire!

And thou, thou weak will,
What little was planned
So slow to fulfil!

What little was planned!
Aye, little by thee,
But by—Whom? this grand,

This wide Mystery,
Whereof but a part
He willed Thee to be!

Be of courage then, Heart,
Hand, Soul and Desire!
Be of courage, forth dart

The flame of thy fire
Thou Spirit within,
That it rest not nor tire,

Growing feeble and thin,
That was eager to burn
Up the body of Sin!

By whose light we discern
Earth's grandeur and state
And humbleness learn,

To go gravely elate,
Judging all by God's eyes,
Which no spectacles sate,

No splendours surprise,
No horrors appal,
For they shine and are wise
And shine wisely on all.

"WHEREFORE, O GOD?"



HEREFORE, O God, when I have done with my sin, When I have added the stain to my soul, and entered the debt, Why is it then, O God, that I hear Thee within, Forgotten or bartered away, as I thought? "Thou canst not forget.

"Me canst thou never forget, nor barter away."
O then, if Thou wert present, when I, alone with the wrong,
Deemed Thee not aware, what avails it to pray?
"Succour me, O my God, and with Thy strength make me strong."

For through the folly of sin I builded Thee weak,
The Bridge to span the abyss, and single Stay of my soul.
What if the Roadway crumble, the Arch-ring break?
Heaven is forfeit then, for ever unreached my goal.

Surely in the hour of sin, in the minute of pleasure,
Thy voice is upon me, O Lord, Thy fingers shatter the cup.
Falters the darkening world, and shrinks its measure;
Greater growest Thou—O hold me mightily up!

When did I hear Thee say, or of Thee was it said?
"Whoso, loathing his sin, unto Me that am sinless turns,
Not in vain hath the wound of his agony bled,
Not unheard he suffers, and not uncomforted yearns."

God! My soul is like to a sea run dry,
The wings of morning are withered, the tides are weary and spent;
And the floor of my heart is wet with my misery;
And there lie the foundered ships—lost *Hope* and broken *Intent.*

Alas for the noble ships that then set sail!
O the noble, noble ships from Youth's anchorage casting loose,
Full many a cask in the hold and many a bale
Carrying of richest worth—to ah! what pitiful use.

Alas, ye ships, your Captain knew not Him,
Knew not the unknowable God, Who maketh and parteth the wave,
Who, when the winds gather and clouds hang grim,
Alone hath power, alone to comfort, alone to save.

Him choose I for Helper, knowing Him not:
Proven only this; my folly and ignorance proved;
Proven the depth of sin, how deep and what
Thereof the horror, and what the need by which I am moved;

Proven my bitter need, my little strength,
Life's terrible void—therefore to Him, the Unknown,
I, ashamed and shuddering, turn at length.
His love shall mould me as clay, His anger carve me as stone.

A PRAYER IN THE TIME OF WAR.



LORD our God, Who dost await Thy Time, Who dost abide in silence, though the earth Fills with the noise and tumult of man's crime, Nor dost prevent his misery nor his mirth;

O Lord our God, Who showest not Thy face,
Nor speakest, though men use Thy name in vain,
Why hast Thou left Thine ancient mercy place,
And us abandoned unto Death and Pain?

O Lord our God, though we lift up our eyes,
We see Thee not. Where is Thy promised Peace?
Nay, where art Thou, Lord God? The world denies
Thy promises, and still do wars increase.

O Lord our God, in Peace we sought not Thee.
How shall we find Thee now, when ways are strange,
Though we confess our sins, though we would be
Believers now in One Who doth not change?

Behold us, Lord, behold us stricken sore,
Behold our Youth and promise of our race
Ravaged by cruel Death, our little store
Of cherished Wisdom scattering apace!

Behold our dreams of human friendliness
Burned, and the unreaped fields of blossomy hope
Laid waste for ever, wherein prayerless
We roamed long since; but now in anguish grope,

And dreadful prayer, lest that for which we fight
Should be too great for us, and we do wrong
To call ourselves the champions of Right,
And the cause perish because we are not strong.

O Lord our God, we grudge not pain nor death,
If death and pain of ours break these hard ills,
And afterward the world draw quieter breath.
But Lord! give faith and magnify our wills!

"FOR THERE WERE PEOPLE IN THE HOUSE."

OR there were people in the house.
And so I rose and left the room
And stepped outside in the half-gloom
Of that rose-coloured evening.
There were strange people in the house
And in my heart faint laughter echoing.

Turning up the hamlet street,
And seawards, by the narrow lane
With honeysuckle and briars sweet,
I went; and my heart laughed again.

And I came on to the heathery brow
Above the bay, and saw the sky
And calm sea mingled, I know not how,
In wonderfullest harmony,
Scarce heard the waves below.

Then laughed my heart no more,
And bent itself and bowed
Down to the plashing shore,
And I lay down and vowed
My being to Him, whom skies and oceans shroud.

Night leaning on the sea
Had stretched her arm toward
To take and bosom me.
And lo! Thou spakest, Lord,

Saying, "Go back! The people in the house
Wait for thee to return.
I mark thy foolishness, how thou dost yearn
To be as these my servants, sea and sky.
Thou foolish child. The people in the house
Have need of thee, thy love and company."

WORSHIP.

OVER the roof the moon is up and clear.
And stars are shining, and the night blows fresh. ❦ And all that in the warm wet day was dear, ❦ All that belongs unto this strife of flesh, ❦ O infinite Heav'n, is fallen, fallen away Before thee. Naked my soul kneels down to pray.

Naked my soul kneels down to make her prayer,
Trembling but not of cold. For all within
I am aflame; and night hath shed a rare
Rapturous delight upon me. I could win
Naked, unbleeding, with breath easier drawn
Than eagles', any peak that out-tops dawn.

What prayer I make, God knows; that know not I,
Except that I feel proudly, and the hour
Speeds the swift angel in me. Whither, why,
Are mysteries, where reason hath no power
And must stay dumb. But the glad heart, it knows
The way to Heaven, and reasons not, but goes.

"IF I BE BROUGHT BENEATH THE WHEELS OF DEATH."



F I be brought
Beneath the wheels of Death,
May no too earth-wise thought
Weigh down my departing breath.

Let me not lie
Clasped near to earth by shame.
Nay, let me, if I must die,
Mount up to Thee like flame.

Lord! While I live,
Help me to search for Thee;
At the dark ending give
Thy spirit to lighten me.

Behold, I know
How vain a thing, how far
From Truth and Life, I go!
I cannot find my star!

Lo, late and soon
Pain comes to claim his own.
Sound me a merry tune
Before that call be blown.

Sound me that tune
Thy lovers love to hear.
Lord! show my spirit soon
Love's meaning written clear!

MORS JANUA.

IS there nothing older than Time?
Is there nothing greater than Space?
Which of the Gods gave beginning to Time?
And which took away from Space her boundaries, her limitations,
And made our world wherein we wander all our lives?
As a man cuts stone from the hills,
So did he cut away Time out of Eternity,
And made a building wherein the body of man might dwell.
Is there nothing older than Time?
Is there nothing greater than Space?

Whither goeth the Soul when the body is dead?
Doth she fly out of the window of the house God hath builded
Into the timeless night,
Into the shapeless void?
Or doth she pass into another room of the great mansion,
Perchance into room after room,
Till to the Room of Rooms,
Where He sitteth Who builded she cometh,
And shall wander not any more,
Utterly calm there for ever,
When the fever of bodies is ended?

And our own chamber, brothers,
Our own room we inhabit,
Surely it is the most fairest of all?
Can He have builded another so open, so beautiful,
So perfectly contrived for the needs of our bodies?
As the fish leaps up in the river,

So leapeth the soul in joy for the body,
In joy that the body of man inhabiteth so fair a home,
This our own chamber, brothers,
Our own room we inhabit.

Yet eagerly goeth the soul when the body is dead,
Whether she flyeth out of the window of the house
Into the timeless night, [God hath builded
Into the shapeless void;
Or whether she passeth into another room of the great
Perchance into room after room, [mansion,
Till to the Room of Rooms,
Where He sitteth Who builded she cometh,
And shall not wander any more,
Eagerly out of her chamber,
Out of love into love she goeth.

KILLED IN ACTION.



his broken-hearted lover?
I his would-be friend of friends?
I who grieve here, brooding over
This of all life's broken ends
Snapped and lost beyond recover—
Who can gather honey from the dark crushed clover?
Who can make amends?

Whose was it to make amending?
Which hand crushed the honeyed bloom?
Yours befriended, or mine befriending?

Nay, but in too little room
Planted we love's seed for tending,
That where skies are endless need have not known
Nor pain nor final gloom. [ending,

Half our lives ago, so nearly!
Was it just a childish game?
How could I have loved so dearly,
Friendship prove so fierce a flame?
Yet remembrance answers clearly,
That the changing heart of me in semblance merely
Changeth, still the same.

Aye, the boy's heart, madly burning,
Is the man's heart, scarce aglow.
As spent the sun, seaward returning,
Sinks his reddening bulk below
Long cloud edges past discerning,
Yet we know he shines still, know elsewhere his
Worshippers cry Lo! [yearning

Lo, the love I would have given,
Even the love you would not choose,
Now in your unfamiliar heaven
Take and refuse not. You cannot refuse.
Love lives on, though the world be riven.
Love now is master of you. In vain have you striven.
Death doth demand his dues.

AMICUS PRO AMICIS.

BEFORE we have slept our fill we are awoken;
The halt is scarce begun, but it is ended;
The word on our lips denied, ere it is spoken;
The wound torn open, even while 'tis mended.

What we have done, that others are undoing.
To every hope of each someone says Nay.
Other men drink the drink of our own brewing.
Other men take the glory of our day.

Ah friend! Is not each task done, yours and mine?
And share not all the praise if one gains glory?
By those quiet vows which bind us, there's one line
For all our graves, for all our dead one story.

Now can we love and hate alone no longer.
Our hates are common, our loves blown together
Into one spray of burning, fiercer, stronger,
Than any wind that blows in any weather.

So when pain comes 'tis not of one man's bearing.
Your pain is mine; my grief the grief of millions.
Who goes to Death now, rides not 'fore men staring
Indifferent-eyed from gaily-dressed pavilions.

For now the hearts of all, the hands of many,
Are his; and Brotherhood more than a name.
Pity we leave for those, if there be any,
To whom life's bitter face still shows the same.

But let us thank our destiny, we chosen—
Of all the ages, we, one land of brothers,—
That we are not of them, whose veins are frozen,
Whose heart of love love inward-growing smothers.

Thank Destiny? Thank God, Who led us hither,
Having been bred in Peace, and showed us clearly,
How the same blood flows in us all, and whither,
And how he dies most blest, who loves most dearly.

So may it be, that after battle coming
To peaceful homes, though schooled in blood and fire,
We carry back with us upon that homing
Knowledge and Love that years shall never tire.

PEACE.

EVERY day comes
Newly the Sun.
We light up anew our homes,
When work is done.

And as after darkest night
'Tis brightest dawning,
Gladder is the window-spark
For the day of our mourning.

Have Faith; it burns
Through present grief,
Thitherward undoubting turns
All our belief.

We will win back
More than of old:
All that we lost and lack
A thousand-fold.

SERVICE.

I.

WHO would be free, but he were free to serve?
Who free to serve, who serveth not by right?
Let those shamed voices in our midst be quite
Henceforward dumb, which did so long unnerve
Our counsel. Aye, what punishment deserve
They who brought England near too low to fight?
Let them behold her, in their own despite
Arming for battle, and conscience-stricken swerve
Into obscurity. There should they lie,
Cowering from the light, who bade us buy disgrace.
But are they dumb, and do they shun man's eye?
Nay, still they do pretend things noble base;
Still would they drag thee back, their own country.
Hear them not, England! Be hard and stern of face,

II.

Stand we not, who were blind, now open-eyed?
Bear we not burdens now, that then we scorned?
Take we not in our hands, as something mourned
No more in giving, Youth's inexchangeable pride?
Nay, press we not eagerly, not to be denied
That bitterest drink, whereof we well are warned?
That Sword of Honour, which our fathers pawned,
Have we not redeemed, and wear it by our side?

And wherefore? For the call of whom? of her,
Whose being is our own, whose limbs we be.
She groaned; in our own hearts we felt the stir
Of sudden strength, we guessed her agony.
All into smoke the nothinged barrier
Of Purposelessness fell. We stood up free.

July, 1915.

TO MY OWN COUNTRY.

(*IN AN HOUR OF GREAT DESPONDENCY.*)

WHAT cometh yet upon thee worse than all?
Bitter the pains, and stiff the pride, I know.
"I walk before the nations" thoughtest thou,
"I bear the lamp, set feet too sure to fall.
Free swarm my myriads. Nought holds them in thrall.
Beneath no general yoke they bend and bow.
Driven by the Unseen, as the sea-winds blow,
Free come they hither. They will hear my call."

They heard thy call. They saw thy servants plead.
And other nations heard and saw and wondered,
Wert thou that old stern mistress? Now thy cry
Sounds sharper, and thy wounds cease not to bleed.
The ghosts of many a city burned and plundered,
Do these rise up against thee and go by?

November, 1915.

WORDSWORTH.

(*AFTER THE PASSING OF THE FIRST MILITARY SERVICE ACT.*)

WORDSWORTH! what thou, a hundred years ago, Wert to this England, such be thou to-day! Our love for England, and the prayers we say For her, and those vast hopes that in us grow,
Seeing her stand among the nations, so
Uplifted, whom we had feared fallen away,
Resolute against the hands that foul and slay
Our human brotherhood—to thee we owe
Hopes, prayers and love. O stern and simple Voice,
Sound in our ears now, bid us keep the path,
Though red it be and terrible. With Fate
And thee to guide him, and with will elate
As was thine own, that hope which each man hath
Never shall fail, nor fail his firm-hued choice.

March 2nd, 1916.

SHELLEY.

SHELLEY! our eagerest English spirit thou!
Who being English but would be like to thee?
Likest in hope of life untamed and free
Except in its own will, that wills to bow
Obedient unto Beauty. Lo, even now
When all the world thou knewest and all the sea
Thou lovedst, by one tempestuous misery
Rages convulsed, I mark on thy clear brow
The very faith whereof we most have need.
Thou didst believe that tyranny must die
And in the dying bequeath its fame and power
To England's chosen angel—Liberty.
It is thy gift in England's saddest hour—
The defeatless faith, for which her youngest bleed.

ON THE AUTHORS OF THE WAR.

I.

LORD, Who after their works rewardest men,
Reward Thou those that brought this War to pass. ❧ May they behold therein, as in a glass
Held up for ever, themselves. May they know
then ❧ That their own souls were parents to the sin,
Which hath devoured our manhood even as grass,
And in their loathed self-knowledge mourn "Alas
That our uncancelled lives did e'er begin!"
Mourn fruitlessly, throughout the enduring age

Of Earth and human kind, with every year
Guilt's anguish deeper burning in each soul;
Until the End be writ on the last Page,
Until the world turn sparkling through the clear
Immensity white-frozen pole to pole.

II.

Then, Father and Master of living and of dead,
Bring them in all the wretched disarray
Of the false pride, that will not fall away
But clings and grows still, though the life be fled,
Bring them where light unutterable is shed
On some vast hall of heaven, and bid One say
"Here have assembled at Earth's ending they
Who suffered for the word of Death ye said."
And let him then proclaim them to the crowd
As noble princes, valiant generals,
Farseeing statesmen, naming them aloud.
A hush of wonder in those mighty halls
Succeeds, and a grave voice: "We bear them not
In mind. Their very deeds have been forgot."

THE FIRST STORM.

ALL of my life till now has been a sleep.
Forgotten and unprofitable things
Were all my business. Oh, forth-shadowings
Of dooms and destinies have assailed the steep
Stern cliff confronting the immortal deep,
Whereon my soul's fair habitation springs.

But ever, as they mounted, guardian wings
Beating unseen down drave them. Now the keep
Is stormed, and all its keepers put to the death.
Those guardian wings unseen are heard no more.
No more for me the play, the sleep, the dream,
But in my face the unheeding ocean breath
Blowing of freedom; as from my desolate shore
I scan the dark, and hear the tempest scream.

"HOME SERVICE."

I.

ONE after another gleaming into the dark
They hurry away—my friends and fellows
in thought. Alone I am left—a lamp unlit
by spark From the unfanciable fight they
fought. O bitterness! For did not I, too, hark
The unfamiliar summons, and as man ought
To answer have not I too answered? Mark
Me too! Am I unworthy? O England, bought
By hidden tears and pains that none have guessed,
This heart of mine I have redeemed for thee
From the domain of shadows, loved too well.
Think not, because these gave their glorious best,
Thou needst not mine; or that the old shadowy glee
Still binds my heart too close with its soft spell.

II.

No, no! That spell is broken many times.
All the old loves shattered lie. Thou knowest,
How one, who sought to shut in sleep-stilled rhymes
His light o' life, goes now but where thou goest,
How that no longer to the tune of old-world chimes
He would be dreaming. For highest unto lowest,
Furthest up and furthest down the dream-light climbs,
Thou new fierce wind of England, that now blowest
Dull spirits to flame—thou sweepest all away!
Lo, how they scurry to the tempest-captured sky,
Loves, dreams, ambitions! All the fickle array
In which we decked our lives out,—yesterday!
They are as shavings from my heart, which I
Have squared and planed for War's hard carpentry.

III.

They are thy leaders, thy seers, thy prophets to be!
They have been down to bottom the abyss
Of life and death, and heighths of bravery
Are as familiar to their feet as this
Dull level earth to mine. Their eyes must see
Over immensities of woe and bliss
Whereto my sight is blinded. Oh to set free
My envying spirit in the long-drawn kiss
Of battle! Oh to rise far up above
Thy ever reddening breasts to the serene
Of agonies endured and mastery won,
Of sympathy which is the mother of love,
And hath been wheresoever man hath been,
And hath done whatsoever man hath done!

IV.

Not by War only, England made reply,
My sons reach manhood. Am I vindicate
By blood alone? Dost thou so bloodily
Think of me now? Is Love so linked with Hate
That he loves me who hates my enemy?
Not so! However altered be my state,
However goodly a gift of bravery
He brings me, deemest thou that I abate
One jot of my demands? That he be just
To all men save himself; harder to shake
From his resolve than mountains; his grave soul
Turned towards God, instinctive that so must
He turn, if life in him its true course take,
Flowing in the one true channel, deep and whole.

V.

Be not afraid, said England, surely thou hast
Upheld me by thy faith in difficult days,
Believing the future lieth in the past,
And all that of old deserved to win men's praise
Deserveth still. Hath war so filled the vast
Of earth? He hath but struck men with amaze,
And blinded them with dust by handfuls cast.
O blind! Not soldiers only wear my bays,
So thou but strive to win men heart and mind
Back to the love of Beauty and of Truth.
Were Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats,
My greatest amid the great of human kind,
Were they among the fighters? No, in sooth,
Dreamers were they all; and theirs are vacant seats.

SOLDIER ON LEAVE.

(IN A COTSWOLD VILLAGE.)


HE sun has gone; the upland meadow curves
Darkly against the enkindled sky.
From the church, through the trees,
Music, mingling voices, throbbing organ-tones,
Floats to me on the warm still air.
Round me, everywhere, all things are at peace—
The smoke from the cottages, straightly ascending,
The old man, sitting at his door,
The clouds, ineffably quiet in the serene of heaven,
The streaming music muffled by walls of stone,
Adding peace upon peace.

The sun has gone; darker grows the meadow.
Dim-blue, dearest of all things to my heart,
The shadowy mist of evening
Mixes with the smoke and winds about the village.
No-one is near me.
The old man has gone into his cottage,
The last hymn has been sung.
Above me, between still flushing clouds, shines but one
The last lark ends his song [star.
And comes down to rest.

The sun has gone, leaving earth to dreams.
Let me stand, so dreaming, a little longer. [awhile,
Stay in the church, my friends; do not come out yet
Till I have done with dreaming, who dream so seldom.
The service is over.
Out swarm the children, shouting, playing;

Out drift their elders, criticising the sermon.
Alas my dream
Broken, scarcely begun!
No longer alone, surrounded with friends and children,
Homeward I go, supperward, to light and cheerful warmth and talk.
Good-night, farewell,—to you my dream,
To you, my vision of peace.

PENTARGON BAY.

FROM Otterham to Beeny, in the late afternoon,
We drove out of the sunlight into the sea.
In thick drifting mist it came up over the land
Cold and wet in our faces as we drove.
All that night and through the morrow morning
Our baffled blindness continued.
But at noon we went to the edge of the cliff
By a little path running above Pentargon Bay,
Hoping to catch a glimpse of the sea
Through the bodiless sea all round us.

Even as we looked, a ray of the sun
Filtering through the roof of cavernous fog
Struck out, like a silent hammer on a soundless anvil,
A dim rainbow,
A white arch in the grayness,
Springing over the gulf from black cliff to cliff.
We said "The mist is lifting!"
I prayed "Let the mist lift!" beneath my breath.

And lo, at once, little by little, it lifted, and the rainbow brightened.
Here and there, a moment, the sun glanced down,
A swirl of sea shone round glistening rocks
And darkened instantly again.
Picture ineffable, unforgettable!
Light and Dark, Known and Unknown,
Embracing, uniting, parting, dissolving,
Till the giant cliff-structure seemed
Part of the mystery they wove.
And the depths, and the sheer rocky walls,
And the roar of the fugitive sea,
And the far-off-vanishing shore,
And the mountainous fog driving in
Under the thrusts of the sun,
How they haunt me, imaging Death,
Death that obliterates life
And reveals in glimpses of unendurable beauty!

For Pentargon Bay required of me an answer,
As it lay, when the mist had utterly gone,
Beautiful, blue, serene, [cliffs.
With the smile of white foam at the feet of the clear-cut
"Was I not more beautiful" said Pentargon Bay,
"When you saw me half-hidden in the skirts of the [mist?
Were not my cliffs more terrible? [me?"
Seemed I not infinite in my heights and my depths?
How will you write of me and how will you remember
And I answered in my heart:
"I will remember you and write of you in the skirts of [the mists,
As I saw you then, terrible and lovely,
Not as now, still and smiling, I behold you."

Breathed the bay at my feet,
"Yet I am the same; I have not changed."
And I answered in my heart:
"I created you, out of myself, in the mist.
Darkness fighting for you with the Light,
Out of myself I created Pentargon Bay."

THE SEA CLIFFS.



T the clifff's edge we paused, for suddenly
Five hundred feet below the Atlantic lay.
The long white breakers thinned upon the beach
Minute beneath us, and an ethereal sound
Trembled about our ears continuously.
And all the ocean visible to our eyes
Seemed like a mighty creature, lying still
And playing on the fringes of the land
With the infinite gentleness of infinite strength.
"Surely" you said "the sea—the sea's alive!"
"Alive, but very full of sleep" I said.
"The day's heat burdens gods as well as men.
Suppose we sit and trick ourselves with thinking
That we are gods, and watch from height of heaven
Our creature, Ocean, at his play." So we
Sat down upon the cliff's edge, by the sea.
And you said, murmuring lazily in the sun,
"Plays Ocean to amuse himself, or us?"

THE CLAIM DENIED.


Y lover said:
Let life 'twixt thee and me
Long as the blood in our veins floweth be
Going and coming of love continually.

All business is vain,
And breath, in toil drawn, what but wasted pain?
Nothing there is, save love, that is but gain.

Sweet, sweet, oh heavenly sweet!
That lips in kisses might thus ever meet!
That I might ever for thee bruise my bare feet!

My lover said:
O darling of my eyes!
Darling of my lips, my straining heart's sole prize,
In whom for me all hope, joy, sorrow, lies.

I care not though men say,
"Honour and wealth and fame he cast away,"
So that my days be thine and mine thy day.

Not the wide-peopled globe,
Not the vast world in its star-broidered robe,
Nor that stern splendour which rebuketh Job,

Nor all the dearest gifts
Hid in Time's houses—song which ever uplifts,
Or strength, or grace, or joy which dreamwise drifts,

Sorrow to rinse my soul
As the fierce acid cleans a tarnished bowl,
And Happiness to make hurt members whole,

No, not all Heaven and Earth,
Not all the boundlessness of grief and mirth,
Are counted, without thee, of any worth.

These things my lover said,
My lover of the dark eyes and curl-crowned head,
In whom boy's strength and girlhood's bloom were wed

And, O my lover (I
Half overcome, half doubting, made reply),
Thou would'st imprison me and thyself deny,

Sharing th' imprisonment.
Nay, not for such contempt their Maker meant
The orb of earth and sweep of firmament,

And not for this designed
Eager limbs, swift spirit, glowing mind,
To lie unused, grown useless, self-confined,

And this full-eddying world
Cannot have willed, that while the great stream swirled
By us, we might lie idle, our sails furled,

Nor that of all men two
Should have no thought to think no deed to do
But each to the other long and lean life through.

Dearest, thou hast thy way
To tread, alone; thou hast thy prayer to say;
Thou hast thy life to live—cry me not, Nay!

Thou hast my love, thou knowest.
But how can I go, wheresoe'er thou goest?
For thou thine own pains hast, thine own joys knowest.

I too have that to bear,
Compact of my own hope, my pain, my care,
Which thou canst never carry, even did'st thou dare.

Ask thyself, did not He
Who dipped us twain in our mortality
Desire each his own spirit to set free?

Then, let us love and kiss!
Briefer than burning is the intolerable bliss,
And after, O my love, the long scar is.

Accept the bliss, the scar
Accept, or we of Love accursèd are,
Who seek his sweet and shun his branding bar.

And let not Love take all,
That is or thine or mine, lest there befall
Or soon or late, a far more urgent call,

And we, fast bound, in vain
Strive, but for all our unavailing pain
Come not, or rising weak fall back again.

This had I said, when he
Bent his face towards mine most bitterly,
And Ah, he said, my love, so fair to see!

So fair to see, so pale—
Love runs from out thy heart, thy blood beats fail.
Love's vessel, how canst thou with Love prevail?

Now see me. I will take
Thee in my hands, and thou thyself wilt make
Body and soul a sacrifice for Love's sake.

And when he had said this,
He would have gathered me to him for that kiss,
Which some say ends, and some begins, our bliss.

But I shrank back. I rose
And left him, and for ever. God, send repose
To me. Forget me, Love; bid my wound close.

SPRING SONG.

SEE, the sun shines in strength,
And the wind stirs the trees,
And the days are at length,
And the birds beat the breeze,
And the world fills with flowers,
As the South sends her showers,
And the skies gleam with cloud,
And the lark sings aloud.

Now do birds build the nest,
And sowers sow the seed,
And lambs are at breast,
And all creatures breed.
And the young life-sap pushes
Up trees and bushes,
And oh! my hasting blood
Agrees that life is good.

AUTUMN COMPLAINT.



THAT I were
Asleep 'neath the ground,
Quietly, where
The red leaves abound,
Deaf to all sound
And dead to all care,
Where the leaves abound
When the trees go bare.

O that I lay
For all time asleep,
Through the night and the day
Travelling on to the Deep,
Travelling on till the Deep
Assserteth His sway,
And all things that creep
Lie still and obey.

WIFE'S SONG.


ARK and rain are falling
Round the house, and calling,
Calling to me all the trees sway together.
This in my lampless room
Pervades its happy gloom—
Stir and speech of gray English weather.

Whiles thou goest walking,
Of thee are they talking,
Of thee, oh my darling, my darling, my lover.
Wind and rain and dark say
Thou art not long away.
Come hither, come homeward. The lonely day is over.

Soon thou art knocking,
I the door unlocking,
Hearts clinging close in the winds' middle ocean.
Love warm and mild,
In the winds' wet wild—
Oh brave and safe is the raft of our devotion!

THE VISIT.


ND he coming back to his room
Looked round and wondered,
For it seemed in its tear-washed gloom
Some great god had thundered,
Had lightened and thundered.

And remembering how stars
Look sheer on the waters
After evening rain, when naught mars
Their calm light; but it alters
More to more, as night alters,—

So alter the light of her eyes
Unto me, breathed his prayer,
More to more as life's light dies
Shining through the dusk air,
Through the dusk tear-washed air.

DEATH OF A SOLDIER.



WORLD, that faintly thro' lattice of evening cloud
Appearest now to mine eyes,
Beyond the barriers, where the sunsets crowd,
So passionately wise,
O home, whereto my heavenly self is vowed!

And thou, dear world of growing and falling leaf,
Winter and summer sun,
Cradle of the little loves and full-grown grief,
By which this heart was won
To allegiance late and proud and lovely belief.

World, in whose lap this muscle and bone took shape,
Whose winds on me have blown,
Who in wood and in valley, by hill and mountain and [cape,
Receivedst me thine own,
Heart-rejoicing dear Earth! Now must I escape.

I must escape thy caresses. I shall not again
Lie content in thy grass.
I run no more against thy winds on the plain.
Thy mountains are shadowed. Alas,
The body is bent no more to its effort and pain.

If I have loved sword-breath of hills and moors,
Dropt glad sweat in thy dust,
Bared head to temperate suns and heavy downpours,
Climbed, not as one who must
But one who will—if all this love endures,

Oh then, it has its counterpart in Heaven.
There shall it be made known,
How to have loved thee, Earth, and to have striven
With thee, and thus to have grown,
Was like brave play, in which high teaching's given.

LOYALTY.

HOW can I pray for Love, remembering you? Remembering you always, when I would forget you, When I go alone in the places, where we two Went together; you seeking to escape, and I would not let you.

How can I kneel to Love, cruellest tyrant?
For he formed of you a god in my eyes, though you would not.
And he whetted the edge of my heart, and made me aspirant
To heaven here, you only consenting; and you could not, you could not!

How can I pursue Love, when I remember
All the shame and all the tears, that were all he gave me?
The hope of April, and the despair of November,
And all that I was, before and after you would not have me?

And yet I pray for Love, kneel to him, pursue him,
Make ready for him the hearth and house of my being,
And strain my eyes, if perchance afar I may view him,
And know all my life will be nought beside that moment of seeing.

"ALOOF."

NOW is the bitter day gone down in Night's o'erwhelming sea. O rest, forget, forgotten and untroubled be, You grievous thoughts, dark cargo of the Day that were. Be still, Despair.

Come now, my Heart, make merry; behold the splendid candles lit.
White shines the table, with gleaming napery. Come, sit,
Take fill of meat and wine, and open door to mirth,
For Joy's to birth.

Let there be Music. Let the light-hearted flute open the strain
With delicate melody apt for vibrant strings to sustain,
Swandown of sound floating above grave chords and [deep—
Why dost thou weep?

O why dost thou weep, my Heart? These are but idle sounds. They cease,
And revellers go, and the hoar night is utter peace.
Come thou without, and walk beneath her changeless [roof,
And be aloof.

IN A TRAIN AT DUSK.



OAR on, roar ahead into darkness wild with rain, Smoke and red sparks streaming against the window-pane, Dimly seen the downland either side the train.

In this dark country, flung like a mighty wake
Behind our ceaseless onrush, quiet lives their courses take,
Each its own light following, for the light's own sake.

Someone sees us flying through the night headlong,
Crashing weight of flame and smoke, metal mass and song,
Wonders that we claim his wonder, hold his eyes so long.

Asks, "Must I my light abandon to the encroaching [dark,
Leave my quiet ways, unto iron music hark,
Homage do to strength, that is but beauty starved and stark?"

Aye, abandon peace! The tranquil lights let shine!
Though you fail, they fail not. Everlasting and divine
They abide. *Our* strength and splendour are to spill like wine.

FADING LIGHT.

ADING light on the Castle Green,
Dying light by the gliding Wye.
The light in me
Fades and dies, to be no more seen,
Dies as the blue dies out of the sky,
The green from the tree.

Yonder the sky is strange and pale;
Trees are standing blackly athwart
The ageing west.
Strange as the words of a foreign tale,
And pale as lips that death has sought
Unkist, unblest.

Lovers walk upon Castle Green,
Boys shout loud by the rippling Wye.
The summer night
Leads over all her tender sheen;
Hushed is the shrill discordant cry;
The west grows white.

White is the west, its blue fire gone;
Colour is drowned in the leaden stream;
All sounds depart,
Die and depart. But I am not alone.
Fainter than sound the waif of a dream
Cries in my heart.

ILLUSION.

UNDER night's soft arch, like a sea,
The gray-blue plain spreads out her bounds.
The trees call everlastingly.
Like waves upon a Northern beach,
Each unto each
They call. O best-beloved of earthly sounds!

Unto that sea my window gives;
All night long its waves are calling;
All night long the vision lives
Of waves upon a Northern beach,
That each to each
Are ever calling, calling, wistful calling.

Out of my window my heart takes flight,
Eastward journeying over the plain.
Could I but meet the broadening light
And plead with him to spare my sea—
But gray dawns he,
And all my visions are seen vain, vain, vain.

AFTER READING MEREDITH'S POEMS.

HOW dare I say, All life is good? I know
The bitter issue of the heedless hours
Too well. Too often black and bitter show
Faces of earth. Hope, even, grimly glowers,
Shaken from her sweet pastimes amid flowers,
Blooded and fouled, at all which unhurt goes.

How dare I name life ill? Have I not seen
Love looking round him in the misty fields?
Have I not walked in woods? Have I not been,
Where Loveliness her sacred body yields
To Ardour's driving flame, where Earth unshields
Her breasts and Ecstasy up-wings serene?

Life cares not though we call him by what name,
Naming himself, with smiles, with christening tears
A friend of enemies, of laughs and fears,
Of Peace, of War, of Purity, of Shame.

MECHANIC REPAIRING A MOTOR-CYCLE.

SOMETHING in the look of him makes my pulses snatch. He crouches on the garage floor beside The patient engine, while I stand and watch. Black dirt and oil and loose blue clothing hide
What can be hidden. But suddenly streaming wide
The sun's rays enter through the door and catch
His neck and by their alchemy are descried
Grace and glory of youth nowhere to match!
Here is the perfect Beauty, not aware
Of its own worth, not asking homage due.
Not like those lads, whom Sculptor Myron knew,
Whose bodies proudly moved in Grecian air,
Bending to gracious play and gleaming bare.
Here's muck of toil, and Youth shines godlike through!

MUSIC.

WHEN skilful fingers wanton on the keys,
And Music magically comes to the birth,
O then my heart puts off these sorrows, these
Desires, this weariness, and wings from earth
A way into a world of infinite ease.
There high contentment dwells, and wide-browed mirth,
And grave ambition, and love, not forced to please,
But love of mighty stature and great girth.
All's good there; there's no bitter stench of the dust,
No boundaries but such as souls can cross.
Envy and malice and self-seeking lust
Avoid that world. Therein is nothing gross;
'Tis lovely, tranquil, eager, ardent, pure.
Silence is after it, silence before.

COWARDICE.

THINKING upon the ill lot of mankind,
Upon the sicknesses, the pangs and pains,
Which make slow conquest over body and mind, For a dread while my spirit no more sustains
This burden, which is life, but fainting yearns
Toward death, as toward utter nothingness,
Fearful of the hurts and miseries she earns
By her own daily sloth and sinning. Less
And ever less grow pride and pleasure. More

And ever more and heavier griefs abide.
And less from day to day abates the wide,
The unbelievable, unhoped-for shore,
Where the divine forgiveness should restore
To youth and strength and hope us weary-eyed.

TO A FRIEND, KILLED.

I MARVEL that you are dead, you who
were so ❦ Acquainted and enamoured with
life's ways. ❦ You are acquainted now with
death; you go ❦ Unapprehended journeys.
Love and Praise
That were but words to you, now burn and glow
Within you and without you. Heaven's ablaze
With splendour, nothing 's hid. Ah! did I know
Aught of the mystery that wraps you from my gaze,
I could instruct the warring world to peace;
Astonishment, and ecstasy, and tears
For innocence abandoned, love profaned,
Should ravish men, till they in war's release
Listened abashed to hear the far-voiced spheres
In song they once belieflessly disdained.

ON THE LAST SONNET OF JOHN KEATS.

BRIGHT Star! whom the immortal dying boy
Envied as symbol of all that is most sure,
Sorrowful that young love's momentary joy
Must ever perish, nor may like thee endure
For ever. Ah, he had not learned, how suns
Live but a day, and drop forgotten and cold
Into the eternal night. You sleepless ones,
Who have kept watch above us ever of old,
Whose sheen is on the vasty wake of life,
You are borne on to an unending sleep,
Oblivious of the loves you warm, the strife
Your heat engendereth now. But we, who weep
Childlike at death, who tremble at his nod—
We outlast time. We are steadfast, even as God.

IN MEMORIAM. (M. E. L.)

I.

HEARD you the bugle calling, the beat of the drum? Lo, the drum-beats and the bugle-call sound out Far-heard, compelling, clear above the hum Of populous life along these busy ways.
Drum-beat of grief, and bugle-call of praise,
Sound in my heart, summoning its folk about
Love's shrine—its whispering thoughts in multitude,
Desires awe-hushed, and laughters quick-subdued.

II.

Death, too familiar grown since first we fought,
Summons not so great a concourse to such grief
For every soldier. Yet, it seems, without
The very face of England is distraught
With groaning winds and rain and scurrying leaf,
Letting her dumb soul out
At Autumn's prompting in the desired relief
Of bitter mourning, for her seed far-flung,
Her splendid seed, flung on far alien fields,
The seed wherefrom had sprung
Rich crops, but ah! that soil no harvest yields.

III.

Mourns England? Mourns that mother of the proud
For whom we die, and who esteems her pain [dead,
As nothing, if the lamp of Freedom shed
Its light unbroken—nay, counts agony gain?
Mourns England for her multitudinous sons?
There shall be one mourned singly amid the slain,
Of all her fallen the bravest eagerest bred,
Who had been reckoned among her chosen ones,
True hero (not what passes now for such
In common speech, the word unmeaning grown)
Of the heroic sacrificial strain,
Not bargaining too little for overmuch
As we, but giving all his splendid own
For her, and glad to give, and give again!

IV.

Dear spirit of song! [earth,
Dear guide through the dark woods and wastes of

Setting thy lips to diverse tunes and sweet
Of melancholy and our unhappy mirth,
Singing none too serious and none too long—
Oh change thee now! They are too thin and hollow,
Thy old tunes, and they torture us to tears.
Oh change thee, for thou singest to changed ears.
Love stands now in full stature; and Death, no more
A shadow on the blind, not seen within
Life's fire-lit study, but without the door
By poets dreaming down the moonlit street,—
Death comes by day and rudely enters in.
The friends war gave us, war has taken away.
Oh, change thee, and be stern and no more sweet.
Fit thee to the day!
For we have reached the hills and steeps of time.
Lead upwards, then, and we will upwards follow
Thee, and his steps, where we thus hardly climb,
Who sped before us on the path sublime.

V.

Sublime! Oh, 'tis the very word of the age.
It is sublime even to mourn as we.
We mourn not for ourselves that such as he
Are lost amid those windswept shadowy hills
Whose ramparts loom above mortality;
Nor mourn for him, knowing he doth assuage
His thirst in their desirous mountain-rills.
Only we mourn the good that would have been.
Yet there's a good, ours through the good we lost.
There is a memory to enflame our wills,
A goal that we must win whate'er it cost;

And our resolve with strong mysterious thrills
Is quickened; for about us and between
Himself and his companions go unseen.

VI.

Aye, bands of radiant helpers are abroad.
They are who died at war by many forms
Of death or slow or eager; and they wake
To life, which knows no skill of shot or sword,
High on that ladder of worlds, up which we climb
To our far home—though here 'neath starry swarms
Its feet are set, and the first step we take
Is Death. Still in the rule of time,
And in the sequent round of space, they move,
Embodied, but in shapes so lovely-rare
As are fit vesture for their glowing wills.
They are at one with all who work and love,
Standing invisible betwixt despair
And us weak bearers of o'erwhelming ills.

VII.

He too is with them. Under his leadership
(Needs must he be the leader of such a band)
With eager eye and tranquil lip
They are at work. His still the impetuous hand,
The quick discovering laugh, rich energy,
Spurring to better yet than any had dreamed,
The same enthusiastic boy we knew,
And yet—far other and greater than he seemed,
Stript of his bodily illusions, and set free
In company of the many, not the few,

In understanding of soulhood, in clear view
Of that unending far-off vast ascent
To the circumference, apex and centre of Time,
Measureless, the sum and essence of all good,
Even the divine home, from which our heart's core went
In the beginning, and yearns thereto and would
Bring Man to God—she, the immortal mime
Of else unpictured glory and loveliness,
Apostle of desire that hath no name.
He sees! And lo, the unnumbered years possess
His soul with exaltation, glorious years
Rolling before him their inexhaustible tide
Of ever deepening love and widening power,
Myriads of myriads, whose golden flow appears
Yet brighter as it bears him whence that came
Which lights his visible being—to destiny, wide
As Heaven and perfect as an opening flower.

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